



**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE**  
**Fire & Rescue Service**  
*Creating Safer Communities*

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham  
Fire and Rescue Authority  
Community Safety Committee

# **EVALUATION OF THE RISK WATCH PROGRAMME**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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**Agenda Item No:**        **6**

**Date:**                      15 April 2008

**Purpose of Report:**

To update the Community Safety Committee on the progress of RiskWatch evaluation following recommendations of the Community Safety Committee report in January 2008.

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## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Government White Paper “Our Fire and Rescue Service” highlighted opportunities for the Fire and Rescue Service to play its part in reducing misery caused by injuries that could have been avoided. The Government has set national targets through ‘Saving Lives, our Healthier Nation’ to “*reduce death rates from accidents by at least one fifth and the rate of serious injury by one tenth by 2010*”, and has identified the prevention of accidental injury and death as a priority.
- 1.2 The Nottinghamshire Children and Young Persons Plan 2008-20011 states:
- “Effective strategies are reducing the incidence of road casualties, avoidable injury and infant mortality, and interagency working is getting more effective at early intervention and preventative actions”.
- 1.3 As part of the Service’s response to these challenges it introduced ‘RiskWatch’ in September 2003 as a pilot programme. It has subsequently grown in strength and popularity, and is now an integral part of the schools educational programme. The target groups are children from the City and County of Nottinghamshire.
- 1.4 The first phase of the programme has been “rolled out” to primary schools in the City, followed by the remainder of the County, district by district. The second phase of the roll out is taking place amongst secondary schools. Out of a total of 403 primary schools, 400 have been provided with the RiskWatch resource packages. Up to October of 2007, a total of 315 school visits in support of RiskWatch had been completed.
- 1.5 It should be remembered that the East Midlands has one of the highest death rates from avoidable injuries, with around 130 excess deaths each year compared with the national average (*East Midlands Public Health Observatory*). Engineering a comprehensive response to this environment, in which the Service is able to effectively contribute, is part of its wider Community Safety strategy
- 1.6 A primary driver for adopting RiskWatch within Nottinghamshire was its proven success elsewhere. For example, a three year study was undertaken in the United States by specialists in education evaluation. This was sponsored by the National Fire Protection Association in order to analyse the impact of RiskWatch on children’s behaviour. The study’s conclusion was that:

“RiskWatch undoubtedly increases the safety related knowledge of students” and “showed a positive response from teachers to the materials”  
(*Final Report of Three Year Evaluation of Risk Watch 2001*)

## 2. REPORT

- 2.1 It is known that the evaluation of such initiatives is a complex issue, not least because the outcome – behavioural change in children, over the long term – is in itself very difficult to assess. In addition, initiatives such as this cannot be

examined in isolation. The Service knows that the modern environment is highly complex, so to assess the impact of any single initiative within that environment is challenging.

- 2.2 Having stated that, the Service does have a strategy to assess RiskWatch as effectively as possible. Evaluation of the RiskWatch programme is managed through two routes. Firstly, on a rolling programme which involves collecting feedback from every teacher and pupil involved, and secondly on a more formal analytical basis over the longer term.
- 2.3 As part of the ongoing evaluation process, feedback forms are sent to primary school teachers to comment on, and rate the effectiveness of the crews' presentations to the children. As part of this, 'student evaluations' also enable the young people to demonstrate their increasing awareness of Fire Safe behaviours as a result of the visit.
- 2.4 Feedback forms are sent to schools, following staff training, to gain information on how they intend to use the programme, and the effectiveness of the information they have received from the RiskWatch Team. Additionally, crews are routinely asked for their feedback following visits, and for their reflections on what did and did not go well.
- 2.5 This information is used to inform future sessions. The Service also receives anecdotal evidence of changes to children's knowledge and behaviour as a result of the programme. Work is also produced by the children that demonstrates their use and understanding of the safety messages.
- 2.6 The Team keep a record of work and photographs to evidence good practice in delivering the RiskWatch programme.

### **Statistical Returns**

- 2.7 Student responses received show that across the four specific learning areas considered, an average of 86% of pupils state that they have gained safety knowledge from the RiskWatch input. Students that rated the quality and value of the input sessions attributed an average rating of 87%, with the lowest rating at 60%.
- 2.8 Teacher evaluation received shows that across the same four specific learning areas referred to above they considered that 91% of pupils had gained safety knowledge from the Risk Watch input. All of the teacher evaluation forms that relate to the quality and value of staff briefings reported 100% satisfaction. The above results give the Service confidence that RiskWatch is being delivered successfully.
- 2.9 The second part of the evaluation strategy involves a more detailed long term examination of the initiative, using specialist advisors. The first phase of this took place in 2005, the next phase is currently under design and should take place over the next 12 months.
- 2.10 The first phase was undertaken by the University of Nottingham, assisted by the Service's Community Safety staff, during 2005. The objective was to 'evaluate the effectiveness of a school based injury prevention programme'. It was carried out in 20 schools in Nottingham, involving 459 children aged 7 to 10 years. This evaluation was, in effect, a scientific study, using

specialised technical analysis tools. The resulting report is available to Members for examination.

- 2.11 In summary, the evaluation highlighted that the RiskWatch programme, delivered by teachers in primary schools, increased some aspects of children's safety knowledge and skills. It recommended that primary schools should consider delivering this programme. The intervention group children correctly answered more fire and burn prevention knowledge questions than control group children.
- 2.12 It was also recommended that in the longer term, larger scale evaluations are required to examine retention of knowledge and skills and impact on safety behaviours and child injury rates. This will be encompassed within the evaluation the Service is currently negotiating with Nottingham Trent University.
- 2.13 Latest figures for the number of hospital admissions caused by avoidable injuries in children aged 0 to 15 shows that performance is better than Local Area Agreement targets, having reduced year on year for six consecutive years. It is possible that the RiskWatch programme has been contributory in this reduction, although, as explained above, it is not definitively quantifiable.

### **Future Developments**

- 2.14 Schools continue to be some of the busiest and most hardworking places in the community. With this in mind, the Service aims to ensure that the RiskWatch initiative enables schools to teach the vital safety messages in a way which is easy to use and provide teachers with fun and engaging activities for the class. To support this, the RiskWatch Team visit schools on an ongoing basis to provide additional training and updates around the programme. Feedback from these visits is also used to refine, adapt and improve the programme.
- 2.15 To support the evaluation strategy it is the Service's intention to introduce a series of pre and post test questioning of students to measure knowledge retention and behaviour change as part of the introduction of RiskWatch in secondary schools.

## **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The use of Service staff within the education team will ensure that financial implications are contained within the existing budget. However, the use of academic institutions to provide in depth evaluation may incur additional costs. These will be considered within the normal budget planning process to ensure a cost effective approach is adopted.

## **4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS**

The Education Team currently has two vacant posts which should be filled through a selection process taking place in April. There are no other human resources or learning and development implications arising from this report.

## **5. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

An initial equality impact assessment is attached at Appendix A

## **6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

Under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act the Service is a statutory partner. It is expected that the Service works in partnership to reduce the number of incidents in this category.

## **7. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

A failure to effectively demonstrate the impact and effectiveness of the RiskWatch programme could lead to criticism through external audit processes such as Comprehensive Area Assessment. The Service will demonstrate that it is using its resources effectively through the evaluation strategy.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Members note the contents of this report and continue to support the Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service in its RiskWatch programme.

## **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)**

- “Improving Child Safety: cluster randomised controlled trial of the “Risk Watch” educational programme for primary school children in the UK” -  
*Report prepared for Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service by Dr Denise Kendrick*

Frank Swann  
**CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**

## INITIAL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

<i>Section</i>	<i>Manager</i>	<i>Date of Assessment</i>	<i>New or Existing</i>
Risk Reduction	ACFO Whelan	March 2008	N/A
Name of Report to be assessed		EVALUATION OF THE RISKWATCH PROGRAMME	
1. Briefly describe the aims, objectives and purpose of the report.		To inform Members of the outcome of an evaluation of the Risk Watch programme.	
2. Who is intended to benefit from this report and what are the outcomes?		It is intended that Members and managers will have an appreciation of the value of the RiskWatch scheme	
3. Who are the main stakeholders in relation to the report?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members;</li> <li>• Brigade Managers;</li> <li>• Head of Community Safety;</li> <li>• Primary schools/secondary schools.</li> </ul>	
4. Who implements and who is responsible for the report?		Head of Community Safety.	

5. Please identify the differential impact in the terms of the six strands below. Please tick yes if you have identified any differential impacts. Please state evidence of negative or positive impacts below.

<i>STRAND</i>	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>	<i>NEGATIVE IMPACT</i>	<i>POSITIVE IMPACT</i>
Race		<b>x</b>		
Gender		<b>x</b>		
Disability		<b>x</b>		
Religion or Belief		<b>x</b>		
Sexuality		<b>x</b>		
Age		<b>x</b>		

6. Can this adverse impact be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group?	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>	7. Should the policy/service proceed to a full impact assessment?	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>
					<b>x</b>

**I am satisfied that this policy has been successfully impact assessed. I understand the impact assessment of this policy is a statutory obligation and that, as owners of this policy, we take responsibility for the completion and quality of this process.**

Signed (completing person) .....ACFO Whelan.....

Date .....March 2008.....